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ABSTRACT

Growth contracts, described as faculty plans for personal and professional growth proposed by each member of the faculty, are examined. The rationale for growth contracts is explained and a list of some institutions using growth contracts or variations of the concept is provided. Growth contract advantages, the role of the evaluation committee or chairperson, and the use of growth contracts and the reward system are presented. A case study involving Gordon College (Wenham, Massachusetts) is discussed. The faculty contract of one teacher, Richard Solar, is contained in the appendix. (SPG)

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Faculty Growth Contracts

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Faculty Growth Contracts

Peter Seldin

There is no one single set of faculty skills that guarantees superior teaching performance. Each successful professor has a unique blend of talents and qualities. Yet with few exceptions colleges and universities often expect their faculty to perform in uniform manner.

This expectation of uniformity has produced three problems in higher education.

First, teaching responsibilities are rarely personalized. Faculty with strengths in lecturing are, for example, frequently assigned to teach small laboratory sections. Colleagues specially gifted as facilitators of independent study projects are routinely assigned to teach large lecture classes. In general, faculty assignment has been more a matter of scheduling convenience than of matching special faculty strengths to departmental needs.

Second, with rare exception the criteria used by institutions to evaluate faculty performance are standardized. All professors are squeezed into the same procrustean bed. Individual skills, values, interests, attitudes, are considered irrelevant in assessing performance. Although expectations should clearly *not* be the same for the 27 year old assistant professor as for the 60 year old full professor, neither is evaluated in terms of individual contribution (Sagen 1976).

In further complication, the vast majority of colleges and universities have spread a fog over the assessment criteria. Few professors have factual knowledge on how their performance will be evaluated.

Third, a bare handful of institutions have systematically encouraged faculty self-development. 'Publish more,' 'work on your teaching,' is commonplace institutional advice, but that is woefully short of specifics on personal professional growth. Peter Drucker, the noted Clarke Professor of Social Sciences and Management at the Claremont Graduate School (California), recently underscored the point in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "It is precisely because the strength of higher education lies in diversity and in individual and highly specific contributions, that faculty members need an organised and directed development effort."

Today, unfortunately, there is little extrinsic motivation for personal and professional self-development. Experimentation and innovation are neither encouraged nor rewarded with the inevitable 'why bother' attitude spreading among the faculty.

All three problems – the need for more individualized faculty roles, the need for more individualized charting of professional growth, and the need for more individualized assessment of teaching performance – are perhaps solvable by the introduction of faculty development plans known as 'growth contracts.'

In brief, the growth consists of faculty plans for personal and professional growth proposed annually by each member of the faculty. The plans represent the professor's commitment to the achievements he has set for himself, and to a written assessment of how well he has met his goals by an evaluation committee of his own choosing (Gordon College Manual).

The individualized programs have two fundamental purposes. First, they give the professors the chance to think about, design and pursue activities which contribute to their professional advancement, and simultaneously contribute to departmental and institutional needs. Second, the programs generate evidence – in clear, measurable, behavioral terms – reflecting faculty preformance for later use by assessment committees.

Rationale for Growth Contracts

The economic problems of the 1970s have sensitized colleges and universities to cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit procedures. Accountability is a major consideration in effective management and a major area of application is faculty performance. Growth contracts, in their emphasis on measuring performance, present a more precise and comprehensive yardstick to assess faculty. Improved decision-making in faculty personnel matters such as tenure, promotion, contract renewal and salary increment will inevitably result.

Precipitous drops in funding and student enrollment have sharply curtailed faculty mobility. Good job offers are not easy to come by. Colleges no longer can afford the luxury of hiring new faculty to infuse fresh ideas, innovative leadership and new teaching techniques. So whereas mobility deflated the pressure for faculty development several years ago, today programs like growth contracts are given high priority in the personal and professional development of faculty.

In general, institutional plans for improving higher education depend on getting the faculty to work harder at what they are now doing. More effective, however, are those programs focusing on new ways to kindle faculty interest and learning. And each professor must accept primary responsibility for his own personal and professional growth. "Self-development," says Jerry Gaff, director of the Project for Institutional Renewal Through Improvement in Teaching, "is part of one's professional obligation. It should be a regular part of the workload and faculty should be rewarded for their efforts." Growth contracts by spelling out each professor's workload can easily be tied to institutional reward systems.

Literature and Use

In recent years, several American educators have taken the lead as proponents of faculty growth contracting. Gaff and Wilson (1971) found 'individualized contracts' a useful approach to establishing differential role responsibilities and evaluation of faculty. Hodgkinson (1973) called growth contracts a viable way to demonstrate professional competence. Seldin (1975) called on department chairmen and faculty members to set mutually acceptable, written, performance goals to be used for faculty assessment. Gross (1976) supported growth contracts as an effective means of encouraging professional development and bringing fairness to the evaluative process. Smith (1976) hailed growth contracts as "best available approach to combining faculty development and evaluation in one program."

Since the concept of growth contracts was only recently developed, it has not yet been adopted by many institutions. In a nationwide survey of faculty development practices in American colleges and universities, John Centra (1976) found that just under 40 percent of the responding institutions reported using faculty growth contracts. But, significantly, institutions using them rated faculty growth contracts *highest* in estimated effectiveness of all the faculty development practices.

The spectrum of colleges and universities using growth contracts includes public and private, independent, state and church-related, community colleges and professional schools, and they are found in every geographic region.

Among the institutions using growth contracts or variations of the concept are Austin College (Texas), Los Medanos College (California), University of Massachusetts, College of Education (Amherst), Howard Community College (Maryland), New College of the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa), and Medical College of Virginia (Richmond). Individual departments, such as the psychology department at the State University of New York (Oswego), have also adopted this approach.

Relating MBO to Faculty Performance

Management-by-objective techniques have long been accepted as valuable in higher education in areas of finance, long-range planning and plant maintenance. Now those same MBO techniques can be applied – as they are in industry – to assess performance level of individuals.

Briefly, the personal and professional goals of each professor are matched with the goals of the college or university, with the help of the department chairperson or evaluation committee. The agreement is clearly stated in writing and approved by both parties. Thereafter, resource support and feedback is provided by the department chairperson or evaluation committee during the period of the agreement. Performance assessment is based on the extent to which goals have been achieved. (Buhl and Greenfield, 1975).

Since there is substantial evidence to support the view that personal involvement in the decision making process is a vital element in productivity and job satisfaction, professors can be expected to respond favorably to their participation in stipulating the criteria on which

their performance will later be assessed. Moreover, the assessment process will probably appear less threatening to many professors than formal ratings by colleagues or administrators.

Use of management-by-objective techniques in developing and evaluating professors has been criticized on the ground that it is too time consuming. It does take more time than check-marking a standard rating sheet. But the extra time is devoted to planning, organizing, innovating and motivating, and is patently of value.

Specific advantages of growth contracts include:

1 Faculty know in advance how their performance is going to be evaluated.

2 Improved academic personnel decisions result from a greater measure of integrity and fairness in the assessment process.

3 Faculty responsibility is related to their strengths while development activities are built into their workload to diminish their weaknesses.

4 Faculty gain job satisfactions from participating in setting up and meeting their own goals.

5 Professors advance their knowledge of cognate disciplines by continuing dialogues.

6 In meetings throughout the year with a chairperson or evaluation committee, professors receive more complete and timely feedback on their performance level.

Performance Targets and Goals

Department chairpersons or evaluation committees must work with each faculty member on the member's history, interests, and current stage of teaching development. Always important to keep in mind, is that growth contracts individually arrived at with each professor must also be fair collectively.

Establishing performance goals is the most critical aspect of management-by-objective techniques. Performance expectations must be explicitly defined in writing. Generalities are to be avoided. It is particularly important to state explicitly the timing and scheduling, support and reward payoffs, feedback systems and future development procedures. In addition, the list of goals should be accompanied by a specific yardstick for measuring their achievement.

For example, the goal 'to be a good teacher' is too vague to suggest appropriate methods of evaluation. An improvement would be 'to obtain from students and faculty colleagues, opinions on the effectiveness of my teaching in the Introduction to Management course.'

The latter statement is specific enough to suggest means for assessing accomplishment. Such assessment might read, for example, "All students in my Introduction to Management will be asked to complete the McKeachie evaluation form on teaching effectiveness at the conclusion of the Fall, 1977 and Spring, 1978 semesters. In addition, the Management Department Chairperson, Dr Patricia Streim will be asked to observe two sessions of my Introduction to Management class. Using the Miller Classroom Visitation Appraisal form, she will rate my teaching performance and will develop a narrative description based on her visit. Dr Streim and I will discuss her opinions as well as student opinion of my teaching. After that, I will prepare a written statement detailing areas in need of improvement and the measures needed to correct teaching weaknesses."

Agreed upon goals must be challenging, significant and attainable within the specified time schedule. The importance of realistic goals cannot be overstated. Goals beyond the realistic reach of a professor will serve only as a demotivating influence. Excessively modest goals will inevitable fall snort of contributing to faculty growth.

Buhl and Greenfield (1975) suggested that a good test of a goal's significance and attainability is "the degree to which both chairperson and faculty member agree that accomplishing it is possible, difficult, and relevant for larger department goals."

Should fresh circumstances force a renegotiation of goals, they should be rewritten with the same diligent attention to specifics as the original set of objectives.

Role of the Evaluation Committee or Chairperson

The process of setting down on paper one's own performance goals can be of inestimable value to the professor both as a developmental experience and as a source of personal motivation. Yet the benefits can be lost if the Evaluation Committee or Chairperson lead the professor to doubt that he really has been granted the freedom to establish his own goals.

Conversely, the Evaluation Committee or Chairperson not voicing their own views about the professor's goals can diminish and even destroy the effectiveness of the development/ appraisal program.

It is essential that the Evaluation Committee offer encouragement and support and constructive suggestions about goals and evaluation criteria. It may be necessary to question items listed by the professor as resources needed to support his growth contract.

Experience suggests that ideally the Evaluation Committee should have three/four persons including one's chairperson. The other members can be drawn from colleagues, alumni or students. Professors from neighboring institutions can be considered. Those selected should be in a good position to help the professor draw up his growth contract.

After helping draw up the growth contract, the Evaluation Committee should meet periodically to monitor the professor's progress toward his goals. Such reviews may occur monthly or quarterly or at natural 'breakpoints' when stages of certain projects are reached or special problems anticipated.

Objectives should be carefully re-examined during the periodic reviews and if necessary revised. Attention should be given to the reasons for the results to date.

When the growth contract ends, the professor and the Evaluation Committee should meet to assess his performance. Results and objectives are compared. At Gordon College (Massachusetts) each faculty member writes a self-assessment of his performance and sends a copy to each member of the Evaluation Committee. A concensus evaluation by the Evaluation Committee is then sent to the faculty member. If he so chooses, the professor at Gordon College may file a copy of the growth contract, self-assessment, and Evaluation Committee assessment in his dossier in the office of the Dean of the Faculty.

Institutional Resources

Academic administrators have at their disposal the resources, financial and otherwise, to support and encourage the achievement of goals in the growth contract. Funds for professional travel, secretaries, graduate assistantships, summer teaching assignments and sabbatical leaves can be helpful to the faculty. However, administrators also have to designate teaching assignments in terms of preferred courses and times of the day, and committee assignments with regard to faculty interests and career goals.

Not all faculty growth contracts require monetary support. But all place demands on the administration for time and unflagging interest in individualizing faculty teaching and committee assignments yet continuing to be faithful to departmental and institutional needs.

It is vital for success that resources needed to achieve growth contract goals be clearly written into the contract and that institutional administrators agree to provide them.

Growth Contracts and the Reward System

Almost all institutions using growth contracts tie them directly to a reward system. This is simple recognition that the function of a contract is to increase the probability of behavior by increasing the probability of reward.

The goals of the professor and the dates by when the institution must make decisions about him should determine how long the growth contract will be in effect. For example, if a professor is eligible for tenure in three years, his growth contract would be written with that frame in mind. The objective is systematically to obtain relevant data on the professor's performance, later to be made available to his tenure committee. The objective, measurable evidence will be very helpful to those charged with making personnel decisions.

There is no doubt that trust of a high order is necessary in performance contracting. A candid discussion freely engaged in by the professor and the Evaluation Committee is crucial. Withholding information, or using it to win points, tends to destroy trust and the effectiveness of growth contracting. A sincerity on both sides a mutual commitment, is vital.

A Case Study

Gordon College, a small (1100 students, 55 fulltime faculty), private, independent, four year liberal arts college in Wenham, Massachusetts, has one of the most advanced systems of individualized faculty development in the United Staates. A Kellogg Foundation grant in September, 1975 of $111,000 for three years provided initial funding for the program. Gordon College has committed its own financial support for at least three more years at a level of funding equal to that of the Kellogg Foundation.

Growth contracts at Gordon College include goals involving such activities as innovative research, publication of scholarly work, development of new courses, attendance at meetings of learned societies and professional associations, development of new instructional patterns, use of consultants, and construction and use of evaluation techniques.

Faculty development is further encouraged by an unusual sabbatical program providing short (11 weeks) and frequent (every 3 years) periods away from formal campus responsibilities.

A booklet entitled *The First Year*, (1976), published by Gordon College, describes the first year's experience with growth contracts. The instructions to faculty participating in the Individual Development Plan are stated as follows:

"a) *Self Assessment* – We asked for a frank assessment of the participant's strengths and current interests as well as of his weaknesses and current dislikes. We encouraged the applicant to be as comprehensive as possible in this step and not limit his remarks to strictly professional categories. If he felt a need to devote more time to his family or for developing interests outside his discipline, he was encouraged to express these; also, if he felt more at home with a seminar type class than with a lecture hall full of freshmen, he was asked to say this as well.

b) *Statement of Institutional Role* – This category broke down further into three kinds of statements:

1 Current Responsibilities – This called for a comprehensive statement of present institutional responsiblities including teaching load, advising, committee work, administrative work, and co-curricular involvement.

2 Assessment of Current Responsibilities – This important step, which not every participant took advantage of gave the applicant an opportunity to indicate the extent to which his current responsibilities defined above were compatible with his strengths, interests, and weaknesses as also noted above.

3 A Definition of Responsibilities During Plan – This step contained what might have been one of the most potentially important parts of the entire Faculty Development Plan: a redefinition of current roles to fit the particular strengths and interests possessed by each faculty member. For reasons discussed below in our description of problems faced during the first year, this potential was never brought to pass but subsequent years may well change this situation.

c) *Individual Plan for Growth* – Here the participant was asked to design his own plan for personal and professional growth. This plan was required to be in the form of goals and means of assessment, a format we later discovered to be far too simple.

d) *Proposed Evaluation Committee* – The participant was required to select an Evaluation Committee of at least two persons who would be capable in assisting in the design and implementation of the plan, and in the evaluation of the participant's growth during the course of the plan. The Committee, we pointed out, need not be limited to faculty colleagues but could include administrators, upper division students, alumni, or, when appropriate, personnel at other institutions. Along with each Evaluation Committee member's name was a place to indicate what his or her anticipated contribution might be.

e) *Budget Request* – The Faculty Development Committee (hereafter known as the FDC) recognized that funding would differ from plan to plan but in an attempt to promote equality, we made a suggestion of a certain sum toward which the participant could aim. Also, in the case of a multi-year plan, we asked for an intemized budget for the initial calendar year. We indicated that requests related to improvement of a purely personal nature (eg. orchestra tickets), while desirable, would not be funded. Two other areas not fundable were personal stipends and student assistants designed to release the participant from his normal responsibilities."

Gordon College President, Richard Gross, says that a pilot study which field-tested the individualized development plan was specifically in winning faculty acceptance. "It was a success primarily because it introduced a new means of faculty growth and improvement in a non-threatening way. A climate of acceptance was created."

Some 70 percent of the Gordon faculty volunteered to participate in the growth contract program in its first year. "Faculty administration of the program was the key in minimizing threat," says Gross.

It is too early to know whether the growth contracts at Gordon will bring about substantive, long term, institutional changes. Other institutions, for example, Passaic County Community College, used performance-based, faculty development/evaluation programs for years, but dropped them when major problems (for example, strained faculty-administration relationships) arose.

However, first indications are encouraging. Typical faculty comments are: "Individualizing any teaching assignment by relating it to my strength – large lecture classes – has made me a more effective teacher." "Growth contracts have led to more equitable faculty evaluation." "Setting personal and professional goals forced me to organize my priorities and my time."

Administrative comments at Gordon are equally supportive: "The major advantage of contracting is that behavior and expectations are explicit." "A major spin-off is that faculty are crossing discipline lines and talking to each other." "Faculty have a greater sense of satisfaction and accomplishment."

Several problems concerning the use of faculty growth contracts were reported in the Gordon booklet:

"1 Evaluation Committees were not always considered seriously by faculty participants. Sometimes members were selected because they were seen as safe and unthreatening. Some committees were consulted after the drafting of the faculty goal statement and were expected to simply "rubber stamp" it. To lessen the likelihood of these problems continuing, Evaluation Committee members at Gordon are now given explicit guidelines describing their responsibilities and one asked for a full description of their individual contributions.

2 Provision for implementing changes in faculty roles under the growth contract plan were not built into the program during its first year. To remedy the situation, faculty are now being asked to complete a "profile form" in which they describe their long-range plans and the related changes in role resulting from these plans. In addition, to more closely relate individual goals to departmental and institutional goals, each professor participating in the growth contract plan will now have an interview with the academic dean and, if appropriate, with his departmental chairperson."

Growth contracts are hardly a cure-all for the many ailments attacking higher education. But they are a promising means of improving college and university teaching by unifying faculty development and evaluation.

Appendix A - Faculty Growth Contract

Name of Faculty Member: Richard Solar
Duration of Contract: September, 1977 – September, 1978
Department: Management

I Self Assessment

a) Strengths and Interests

1 My teaching strengths lie in guiding small group discussion and working one-to-one with students.

2 My bibliographic background in management – especially Organizational Behavior – is broad and current.

3 I am interested in expanding my doctoral research regarding faculty evaluation and development. To that end, I expect to write journal articles on a regular basis.

4 Within the past two years, my interest in the teaching/learning process has sharpened. I am particularly interested in investigating this process as it applies to the business college and other professional units of the university (like social work, law, education).

b) Weaknesses

1 Lecturing to large classes underscores my difficulty in organizing material in a reasonable sequence.

2 I am not very effective in carrying out my administrative duties as Chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Arranging meetings and preparing material in advance of deadlines are not my strong areas.

3 My experience with management has largely been restricted to the academic setting in recent years.

II Statement of Institutional Role

a) Current Responsibilities

1 Teach three upper-level courses in management each term, as indicated in the catalog.

2 Chair College of Business Personnel Committee which meets monthly.

3 Academic advisor for 10 management majors.

4 Guide independent sutdy projects of three management honors students.

5 Faculty advisor for Management Club.

6 Project director on American Management Association funded investigation into application of behavioral science techniques to multi-national corporations.

b) Assessment of Current Responsibilities

Generally, I am well satisfied with my institutional responsibilities, with the following exceptions:

1 Too much of my time is taken up with administrative duties relating to the Personnel Committee.

2 My schedule of responsibilities has not permitted sufficient time to complete the writing of my manuscript on American faculty development practices.

c) Responsibilities during this plan

The following changes in institutional responsibility – agreed to by both my department chairman, Dr Patricia Streim, and my Evaluation Committee – will be implemented for the duration of this contract period:

1 The position of Personnel Committee Chairperson will be rotated to another faculty member in the department.

2 I will join the Admissions Committee (which meets once weekly during January, February, and March).

3 I will teach the senior seminar in Human Resource Management in place of the larger Introduction to Management course.

4 My manuscript on American faculty development practices will be completed during this contract period.

III Individual Plan for Growth

Goal A: To learn how others perceive my teaching.
Means of Assessment: 1

1 The McKeachie Student Evaluation Form will be administered in each of my classes. Results will be discussed with the Department Chairperson and my Evaluation Committee.

2 Two classes of my Human Resource Management seminar will be video-taped. Self-assessment and review by Dr Jones, Chairman of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction will follow. Results will be discussed with the Department Chairperson and my Evaluation Committee.

Goal B: To prepare and submit one article on faculty development for publication in a Class I Journal.
Means of Assessment: I will present the Journal's letter accepting or rejecting the article to my Evaluation Committee.

Goal C: To prepare and submit one research grant for funding to either the Human Relations Foundation or the Behavioral Science Association.
Means of Assessment: The letter of transmittal and a copy of the grant proposed will be given to my Evaluation Committee. Copies of all correspondence relating to the proposal will also be given to the Evaluation Committee.

Goal D: To up-date my knowledge of the current 'real world' of business.
Method of Assessment: After attending the American Management Association Conference on this topic, I will prepare a statement for the Evaluation Committee summarizing major trends. I will also prepare a talk on the same topic for presentation to Faculty of the College of Business.

Goal E: To prepare a syllabus for the new department course in Motivation and Leadership (Mgmt. 441).
Means of Assessment: The syllabus will be presented for review by departmental faculty by April, 1977. Copies will be given to my Evaluation Committee.

IV Proposed Evaluation Committee

a) Dr Ernest Cooper, Professor of Accounting.

His well-deserved reputation for submitting excellent grant proposals will enable Dr Cooper to make a significant contribution to my efforts to obtain outside funding.

b) Dr William Jones, Chairperson, Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

I expect Dr Jones to be particularly helpful to my efforts to learn how others perceive my teaching. In addition, his professional background as a professor teaching others how to teach more effectively will be especially helpful in reviewing video tapes of my teaching.

c) Dr Patricia Streim, Chairperson, Department Management.

Dr Streim's background in industry and knowledge of current personnel practices will contribute substantially to my preparation of a practical and realistic syllabus for the new course in Motivation and Leadership.

V Procedures for Monitoring Progress

a) Regularly scheduled meetings (last week in January and May) with the full Evaluation Committee.

b) Informal consultation, as needed, with appropriate Evaluation Committee members.

VI Budget Request

1 Itemized budget for typing and duplicating expenses relating to preparation of manuscript

Approximately 30 pages at $1 00 ..... $30.00

2 Travel expenses incurred in visiting three nearby colleges to discuss their Motivation and Leadership course

Meals, lodging, transportation 75.00

3 Travel to American Management Association Conference entitled 'Business for Business Professors'

a) Round trip airfare to Denver	$280.00	
b) Registration fee	70.00	
c) Lodging (February 8–11)	75.00	
d) Meals	50.00	
Total ...	$475.00	..... 475.00

Total Cost of Plan $580.00

Appendix B - Bibliography

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